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## ON SOME PASSAGES OF CATULLUS AND MARTIAL

BY J. P. POSTGATE

### I. CATULLUS lxvi. 75 ff.:

non his tam laetor rebus quam me afore semper  
afore me a dominae uertice discrucior  
quicum ego, dum uirgo quondam fuit, omnibus expers  
unguentis, una milia multa bibi.  
nunc uos, optato cum iunxit lumine taeda,  
non prius unanimis corpora coniugibus  
tradite nudantes reiecta ueste papillas  
quam iucunda mihi munera libet onyx.

When a passage has provoked as much interpretation and emendation as the couplet 77-78 above, we may with certainty infer either that its difficulties are insoluble, in which case the prudent will leave it alone, or that their solution depends upon considerations that are likely to have eluded observation. Here fortunately the general thought is clear enough. The tress of Berenice's hair expresses its grief at being now separated from its mistress' head on which it had been drenched with precious ointments, and appeals to happily mated wives to remember it in their offerings on their nuptial night. The glaring absurdity of the conjunction of "*omnibus expers unguentis*" with "*una milia multa bibi*" has led to a crop of "emendations" which may be dismissed in the words of Professor Vahlen (*Hermes*, Vol. XV, p. 269) "*quae Lachmannus, quae Hauptius alique nouarunt praetereo quorum nihil est quod sua probabilitate placeat.*" The interpretations, in themselves, deserve as short a shrift. But they may be cited in part to bring out the points upon which attention must be centered. W. Johnson, Nāke, and Mr. F. W. Cornish, the last English translator of Catullus, consider the text to mean "in whose company *I that now* am robbed of all unguents drank in many thousand unguents while she was yet a maid." For this, Latinity requires the insertion of *illa nunc* (*omnibus unguentis expers*). The current explanation may be illustrated from the

translations or paraphrases of Professor Vahlen, *loc. cit.*, “quicum ego, *quae*, dum quondam uirgo fuit illa” (higher up the page “dum uirgo fuit domina”), “omnibus expers *eram*, unguentis una (potione) milia multa bibi,” and Professor Ellis “with whom I, as I was a stranger to all unguents while Berenice *was in the former time* of her virginity, so I have *since* drained in her company many thousands of oils.” Mr. Ellis rightly says that “the construction is like Seneca *Epist.* 99. 16, “clarius cum audiuntur gemunt, et *taciti quietique dum secretum est*, cum aliquos uidere, in fletus nouos excitantur,” “in which *taciti—secretum est* is opposed as a period to *cum aliquos uidere*, in *fletus nouos excitantur* just as *expers o. unguentis, dum uirgo quondam fuit* is opposed to *una milia multa bibi*.” There is likeness between the two places. But unlikeness also, since in Seneca the statement is general, but here particular. And this difference is essential. It may be observed on both readings, first, that both require the insertion of *illa* to make Latinity; secondly that, though professedly taking *quondam* with *dum fuit*, they either ignore its force altogether or remove it outside its clause. This is indicated by Professor Vahlen’s alternative paraphrase and by a variant proposed by Professor Ellis which, while keeping the same punctuation as before, he translates, “with whom in the old times while she was still a girl sprinkled (*expersa*) beyond all others with every kind of unguent, I absorbed many thousand essences.” The truth is that, as the Seneca parallel shows, it is not required with *dum fuit*; and that, if inserted, then, just as *consule Pompeio quondam* in the epigram discussed below means “in the former consulship of Pompeius” as opposed to his present consulship, so these words should contrast Berenice’s former virginity with her present virginity—an absurdity which interpretation has, at all costs, to avoid. But *quondam*, though superfluous and worse with *dum fuit*, is badly wanted with *expers*. And this the Latin should be punctuated to show:

quicum ego, dum uirgo quondam fuit omnibus expers  
unguentis, una milia multa bibi

or, if three more commas are preferred,

quicum ego, dum uirgo, quondam, fuit, omnibus expers  
unguentis, una milia multa bibi.

This order of words for "quondam, dum uirgo fuit, omnibus expers unguentis" is a hyperbaton which it is not difficult to parallel from Catullus: 44. 7 ff. "tussim, | non immerenti quam mihi meus uenter | dum sumptuosas appeto *dedit* cenas" also in a *dum* clause; and in this very poem 18 "*non ita me diui uera gemunt iuerint.*" The legitimacy of the collocation *quondam expers* requires no proof: but as an illustration we may take Lygdamus iii. l. 23 "*haec tibi uir quondam nunc frater, casta Neaera, | mittit.*"

Having, I trust, disproved the first alternative explanation of the inveterate disagreement of scholars about this passage, I will conclude with a word upon the second. Students of science in its various forms take a number of precautions to prevent their investigations being vitiated by the intrusion of their own persons or personalities: students of language and literature take next to none. Now in the personal equation of the modern scholar there is no more constant or more potent member than the notion that the construction of a sentence follows its order or that proximity of words involves connection of thoughts. So if *quondam* stands before *fuit*, with *fuit* will it be construed, whatever the clamor of sense or context. That here is the source of the mischief, we may confidently aver, when we note that a scholar who has paid particular attention to the prevalence of hyperbaton in Latin poets writes thus upon its character:

If anyone remarks on this that such an arrangement is contorted and unnatural, and wonders how the ancients, lacking our system of punctuation, could understand it at all, I shall cordially agree with him.<sup>1</sup>

It may be doubted whether the writers from whom Professor Housman quotes would have acknowledged that their order was "contorted and unnatural" or have realized that a comprehension of their meaning is facilitated by this sort of thing—"fecit, ut ante, caeam, docui, spissescere nubem" Lucr. vi. 176. The modern system of punctuation, developed, it would appear, in part to mitigate the ambiguity which the absence or the inadequacy of inflexions entails upon a language, is frequently found of service by the reader who would escape from the obligation of grasping the sound and sense of a sentence as a whole. But the ancients neither required it for

<sup>1</sup>Professor A. E. Housman, *Journal of Philology* XVIII, p. 6, where he gives a copious collection of hyperbata. I have had added some more in *A. J. P.* XVII, p. 41.

the former use nor desired it for the latter. They did not write for the eye of the skipper and the skimmer, but for the voice and the ear of people to whom the form and frame of the ancient sentence was a very part of their consciousness. And when so read we may be certain that there is not one of these "contorted" sentences which is not at once intelligible—and that one not least of all, which we have seen has been so long misunderstood.

I will add two examples where our modern habits of reading interfere with our appreciation of an ancient's meaning. In Aristophanes *Lysistrata* 628:

καὶ διαλλάττειν πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἀνδράσιν Λακωνικοῖς

πρὸς has nothing to do with ἡμᾶς next to which it stands, but signifies "besides." And in Statius *Thebais* x. 827 ff.:

hactenus arma tubae ferrumque et uolnera; sed nunc  
 comminus astrigeros Capaneus tollendus in axes.  
 non mihi iam solito uatum de more canendum;  
 maior ab Aoniis poscenda amentia lucis. 830  
 mecum omnes audete deae! siue ille profunda  
 missus nocte furor Capaneaue signa secutae  
 arma Iouem contra Stygiae rapuere sorores  
 seu uirtus egressa modum seu gloria praeceps e. q. s.

Here *Capanea* goes primarily with *arma* rather than with *signa* which stands next to it, since the crucial point is why *Capaneus* fought against Iuppiter. And if it be not so taken, *rapuere arma* will have its proper sense of 'caught up arms' and the Eumenides will be said to do the fighting themselves.

## II. CATULLUS cxiii:

Consule Pompeio quondam duo, Cinna, solebant  
 Meciliam. facto consule nunc iterum  
 manserunt duo, sed creuerunt milia in unum  
 singula. fecundum semen adulterio.

No one now doubts who is the subject of this epigram. It is Mucia, the daughter of Q. Mucius Scaeuola, and the third wife of Pompey, with whom, as Catullus hints here, Julius Caesar had an intrigue. Pleitner who made this discovery not unnaturally thought that her name in some form or other, should appear in the text, and he conjectured *Mucillam*, the diminutive adopted, e. g.,

by Schwabe, Baehrens,<sup>1</sup> Riese, and myself in the Corpus text. The obstacle to this change is that the manuscripts present another name, and that an actual one. For *Mecilia(m)* means *Maecilia(m)*. Is it possible to resolve the difficulty without deserting the tradition? Let us see.

First, to deal with the alteration of the name. There is nothing more contumelious, nothing more characteristic of fashionable or aristocratic insolence<sup>2</sup> than to allude to a person by a soubriquet or a perversion of his proper name. This weapon Catullus did not scruple to use, as we know from the offensive nickname (*Mentula*) which he applied to his enemy Mamurra. It is therefore in keeping with what we know of him that he should miscall a lady belonging to the illustrious family of the Scaeuolae by an obscure and plebeian name. But why by this particular one? Shall we rest content with the explanation that it was the one most convenient to his verse? To contemporaries of Catullus and Pompey it would suggest another name, associated with one of the least creditable incidents of that statesman's career. *Maecilia* corresponds, syllable for syllable, to *Aemilia*, the name of his previous wife. The circumstances of her marriage to Pompey are thus given by his biographer Plutarch *Pomp.* 9 (tr. Long):

As Sulla admired Pompeius for his superior merit and thought that he would be a great support to his own interests, he was anxious in some way to attach him by family relations. Metella, the wife of Sulla, had also the same wish, and they persuaded Pompeius to put away Antistia and to take to wife Aemilia, the stepdaughter of Sulla, the child of Metella by Scaurus, who was living with her husband and was pregnant. This matter of the marriage was of a tyrannical character and more suited to the interests of Sulla than conformable to the character of Pompeius, for Aemilia, who was pregnant, was taken from another to be married to him, and Antistia was put away with dishonor and under lamentable circumstances, inasmuch as she had just lost her father also, and that too on her husband's account; for Antistius was murdered in the Senate-house because he was considered to be an adherent of Sulla for the sake of Pompeius; and the mother of Antistia having witnessed all this put an

<sup>1</sup> Baehrens (*Commentary*) thinks that it should be written *Moecillam*, "forma plebeia" which is no improvement.

<sup>2</sup> This may be illustrated by an anecdote from actual experience. A *εὐγενής* who expected to be first in his examination thus referred to a contemporary rival whom I will here call Fox. "Who else is there?" he said; "there's a man called Ox or Pox!"

end to her life, so that this misfortune was added to the tragedy of the marriage; and in sooth another besides, for Aemilia herself died immediately afterwards in childbirth in the house of Pompeius.<sup>1</sup>

It seems then not improbable that in his selection of a name Catullus flings out at Pompey a taunt, the point of which a contemporary would easily comprehend, that he who had robbed another man of his wife was himself treated no better than he had thus deserved. *ὁ γὰρ ἐς τὰς ἀλλοτριὰς ἐποίησεν αὐτὸς τοῦτοισιν ἐπλήγησεν*—Aristophanes *Ran.* 1049.

I pass now to what seems a distant topic—the variants for the proper name *Caecilianus* in certain codices of Martial. This word, as an appellation of fictitious persons satirized on different accounts, is the vulgate reading in fifteen epigrams. In two places<sup>2</sup> Cinna then is substantial manuscript support for another name, in i. 73 that of A<sup>A</sup> (Lindsay's first class) and in ix. 70. 6, 10 that of B<sup>A</sup> (his second class). This name is "*Maecilianus*." And we must first ask if it has any claim to have come from the hand of Martial himself. Schneidewin thought it had; for it stands in his text at i. 73. If it has, then *Caecilianus* must be an intruder in one or other of the poems cited. There is no reason why it should not be. In all the four places where *Caedicianus* is found, one or more of Schneidewin's codices give *Caecilianus* and the same is true of *Sextilianus* in x. 29. 6. More striking proof still that a wrong name may creep into our text of Martial may be gathered from the dissension of the MSS at vi. 88. Here A<sup>A</sup> C<sup>A</sup> give *Caecilianus*, but B<sup>A</sup> *Sosibianus*; and it is certain that either the one or the other of these readings is an importation from other places where they occur—12 places, say, for *Caecilianus* and 3 for *Sosibianus*. A purely accidental confusion is quite out of the question.

There being thus sufficient evidence that a proper name in an epigram of Martial is liable to be assimilated to a name of similar scansion in other epigrams, it remains to consider whether this may have happened to *Maecilianus* and *Caecilianus*. The first name, to say the least, is incomparably the rarer; and the temptation to change it, when, moreover, the change was so slight, would be very considerable. And this would account for the fact that it

<sup>1</sup> Compare *Sulla* 33 and Zonaras 10. 1.

<sup>2</sup> I neglect iv. 15, as the attestation is doubtful. Lindsay's note is "*meciliane* corr. cec. C<sup>A</sup> ut uid. (in Comm. ad CAECILIANUM)."

is supported only by minorities among the MSS. We may infer, then, that the testimony of the MSS of Martial does not discountenance the presumption that *Maecilianus* was the original name in i. 73 or in ix. 70, or, it may be, in both.

The great influence which the writings of Catullus had upon his confessed admirer the epigrammatist is known to all the world, and I shall not be accused of rashness if I endeavor to trace a connection with a piece so notorious as the one before us. Martial i. 73 and Catullus cxiii resemble each other in more than one respect. The subject in both cases is a wife's infidelity, and it is treated in both cases with outspoken coarseness. This cannot count for very much; but what appears to be more significant is that in both cases the hint of the epigram is a prodigious increase in the lady's admirers. In Catullus the rise is from *duo* to *duo milia*; in Martial from *nemo gratis* to *ingens turba*. It would make the Martial epigram more biting if instead of a shadowy *Caecilianus* we had a *Maecilianus*, a "Maecilia-man" as we might say, whose measures to preserve his wife's fidelity were as unfortunate as those of the famous cuckold in Catullus.

The circumstances of ix. 70 are different, but they are simple enough if we have the Latin before us. Accordingly I will give the reading *Maecilianus* the same chance here which Schneidewin has given it in i. 73. I will place it in the context, and, with the shortest of paraphrases to show what, if accepted, it would mean, I will leave the question of merit to the unbiased judgment of the reader.

Dixerat 'o mores! o tempora!' Tullius olim  
sacrilegum strueret cum Catilina nefas,  
cum gener atque socer diris concurreret armis  
maestaque ciuili caede maderet humus:  
cur nunc 'o mores!' cur nunc 'o tempora!' dicis?  
quod tibi non placeat, Maeciliane, quid est?  
nulla ducum feritas, nulla est insania ferri;  
pace frui certa laetitiaque licet.  
non nostri faciunt tibi quod tua tempora sordent,  
sed faciunt mores, Maeciliane, tui.

Cicero exclaimed on the morals of his times in the age of a Catiline and the conflicts of a Caesar and a Pompey. But why do you do so now, Maecilianus? It is not our times that are to blame. It is you whose morals are a Maecilian's.